

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 EURE-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 SP-02 L-01

PM-03 INR-05 INRE-00 DODE-00 CIAE-00 RSC-01 PRS-01

SSO-00 /041 W

----- 123275

O R 151650Z NOV 74

FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 6284

INFO AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ATHENS 8235

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PING, GR

SUBJ: GREEK ELECTIONS: EMBASSY'S ESTIMATES OF
PROBABLE RESULTS

1. SUMMARY. GREEK ELECTORATE OF ABOUT 6,000,000 WILL PARTICI-
PATE IN NOVEMBER 17 ELECTION OF 300 DEPUTIES AFTER
ORDERLY CAMPAIGN. CARAMANLIS WILL WIN A SUBSTANTIAL VICTORY
AND HIS PARTY SHOULD RECEIVE 45-50 PERCENT OF THE VOTES CAST,
PERHAPS SLIGHTLY MORE. THIS SHOULD ENABLE HIM TO FORM A
ONE-PARTY GOVERNMENT IF HE WISHES. (UNDER GREECE'S
REINFORCED PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION SYSTEM, 41 OR 42 PERCENT
OF THE POPULAR VOTE COULD PRODUCE AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY IN
THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES.) ON ELECTION EVE IT MUST STILL
BE RATED A TOSS-UP WHETHER MAVROS OR PAPANDREOU WILL COME
IN SECOND, ALTHOUGH THE NOD CLEARLY GOES TO MAVROS. THE
PARTIES OF THESE TWO SHOULD DIVIDE ABOUT 35-40PERCENT OF THE
VOTE, ABOUT 15-20PERCENT EACH. THE UNITED LEFT (THE THREE
COMMUNIST PARTIES) SHOULD GARNER 12-15PERCENT, AND THE EXTREME
RIGHT (GAROUFALIAS) AND OTHERS THE REMAINING 3-5PERCENT. END
SUMMARY.

2. ESTIMATES OF PROBABLE RESULTS OF SUNDAY'S ELECTIONS IN
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GREECE REST ON FAR MORE PRECARIOUS GROUND THAN USUAL. IN

THE FIRST PLACE, THERE HAS BEEN NO RELIABLE SCIENTIFIC POLLING AND THERE EXISTS NO COUNTRY-WIDE OR BROAD FACTUAL BASIS FOR FORECASTING RESULTS. SECOND, THERE HAVE BEEN NO ELECTIONS IN GREECE FOR MORE THAN TEN YEARS, AND THERE HAVE BEEN MANY CHANGES BOTH IN GREECE AND WORLD-WIDE IN THE INTERIM. THIRD, THE ELECTORATE NOW INCLUDES A NEW YOUNG GENERATION OF VOTERS RANGING IN AGE FROM 21 TO THEIR EARLY THIRTIES WHOSE POLITICAL VIEWS, EXPECTED TO BE MORE RADICALIZED THAN THEIR ELDERS, REMAIN TO BE EXPRESSED FOR THE FIRST TIME. FOURTH, LEGALIZATION OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND ITS PARTICIPATION IN THE UNITED LEFT PERMIT A COMMITTED COMMUNIST VOTE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 30 YEARS. FIFTH, TRADITIONAL PARTY DIVISIONS--MOST NOTABLY THAT OF THE BROADLY-BASED AND VICTORIOUS CENTER UNION PARTY OF TEN YEARS AGO--HAVE BEEN LARGELY BROKEN. FINALLY, IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT A LARGE NUMBER OF VOTERS WILL NOT MAKE THEIR FINAL DECISION AS TO HOW TO VOTE UNTIL THE LAST MOMENT, AND THERE COULD STILL BE DEVELOPMENTS BETWEEN NOW AND SUNDAY MORNING THAT COULD INFLUENCE THEM.

3. EVEN WITH THESE QUALIFICATIONS AND UNKNOWN EMBASSY STILL BELIEVES CARAMANLIS IS VIRTUALLY CERTAIN TO WIN A SUBSTANTIAL VICTORY. WE FORESEE HIS NEW DEMOCRACY (ND) PARTY WILL RECEIVE IN RANGE OF 45-50PERCENT OF POPULAR VOTE AND PERHAPS SLIGHTLY MORE, UNITED LEFT 12-15PERCENT, EDE AND OTHER MINOR PARTIES LESS THAN 5 PERCENT AND CENTER UNION/NEW FORCES (MAVROS' PARTY) AND PASOK (PAPANDREOU PARTY) DIVIDING THE REMAINING 35-40PERCENT, ROUGHLY WITHIN 15-20PERCENT RANGE FOR BOTH. IN FORECASTING THESE RESULTS EMBASSY OFFICERS HAVE DIFFERED, PARTICULARLY ON ESTIMATES OF NEW DEMOCRACY AND UNITED LEFT BALLOTING STRENGTH, WHERE SOME IN MISSION BELIEVE ND WILL DEFINITELY POLL MORE THAN 50PERCENT OF VOTE AND UNITED LEFT LESS THAN 12-15PERCENT. EMBASSY PROGNOSIS IS VIRTUALLY UNANIMOUS, HOWEVER, IN RESERVING APPROXIMATELY 35-40PERCENT OF VOTE FOR DIVISION BETWEEN CENTER UNION/NEW FORCES AND PASOK CANDIDATES WHO APPEAL TO OVERLAPPING SEGMENTS OF ELECTORATE. CONSENSUS CLEARLY GIVES EDGE TO CU/NF OVER PASOK, BUT IT IS RATED CLOSE TO A TOSS-UP. IN ANY CASE NEITHER IS LIKELY TO DRAIN MUCH STRENGTH FROM ND.

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4. BARRING THE UNEXPECTED--AND WE PLACE EXTREMELY LOW ODDS ON POSSIBILITY OF SERIOUS CIVIL DISTURBANCES OR MILITARY INTERVENTION--GREEK VOTERS ON NOVEMBER 17 WILL BALLOT FOR OVER 1400 CANDIDATES CULMINATING ONE MONTH CAMPAIGN NOTABLE FOR ITS ORDERLINESS AND, RELATIVELY SPEAKING, HIGH MORAL TONE.

5. NEW DEMOCRACY. LAST WEEK OF CAMPAIGN WITNESSED EACH POLITICAL LEADER TAKING STAND IN POPULAR RALLY IN CENTRAL ATHENS AND ON REGULAR TELEVISION POLITICAL SPOTS IN FINAL APPEAL TO VOTERS. CARAMANLIS MAINTAINED STATESMANLIKE POSTURE, PROJECTING HIMSELF ON BASIS OF PERSONAL APPEAL AND HIS HISTORICAL RECORD. HE IS REGARDED, PARTICULARLY IN RURAL AREAS AND BY UPPER MIDDLE CLASS, AS NEAR NATIONAL SAVIOUR, GUARANTOR OF PUBLIC ORDER AND STABILITY, AND ON "NATIONAL ISSUE" OF CYPRUS AS NATIONS'S BEST PROSPECT AS PEACEMAKER. PROSPERITY AND SECURITY OF 1955-63 CARAMANLIS GOVERNMENT WERE UNPRECEDENTED IN POST-WORLD WAR II GREECE AND HIS JULY 24, 1974 GOVERNMENT HAS TURNED IN STEADY AND LAUDABLE PERFORMANCE. NEW DEMOCRACY IS WELL ORGANIZED AS A PARTY, HAS A SOLIDE CORE OF RELIABLE SUPPORT, AND IN A POSITION TO MAKE SIGNIFICANT INROADS INTO THE CONSTITUENCY OF THE CENTER AS WELL AS AMONG NEW VOTERS. THERE IS A POSSIBILITY CARAMANLIS WILL GARNER A MAJORITY OF POPULAR VOTE--EVEN TAKING HALF OF THE VOTE BY GREEK STANDARDS WOULD BE A REAL LANDSLIDE.

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PM-03 INR-05 INRE-00 DODE-00 CIAE-00 RSC-01 PRS-01

SSO-00 /041 W

----- 123351

O R 151650Z NOV 74

FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 6285

INFO AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI

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6. CENTER UNION. GEORGE MAVROS AS USUAL IS BEING SQUEEZED FROM LEFT AND RIGHT AND HAS FAILED TO MOUNT THE KIND OF FORCEFUL AND COHERENT CAMPAIGN THAT MIGHT HAVE ENABLED HIM TO GAIN MORE THAN HE WILL LOSE FROM THIS SITUATION.

THE CENTER UNION'S PROGRAM, DRAFTED IN LARGE PART BY HIS COALITION PARTNERS, THE INTELLIGENT BUT POLITICALLY INEXPERIENCED YOUNG LIBERALS OF THE NEW POLITICAL FORCES, IS THOUGHTFUL AND REALISTIC, BUT MAVROS HIMSELF, SQUARE, FAMILIAR AND UNINSPIRING, HAS NOT SUCCEEDED IN PROJECTING THE PROGRAM OR EVEN, ON OCCASION, CONVINCING VOTERS THAT HE HAS READ IT. THE CENTER UNION ORGANIZATION ITSELF IS MORE OR LESS WHAT IT WAS A DECADE AGO, WHICH IS TO SAY DEPLORABLE. MOREOVER, CENTER UNION/NEW FORCES GOT OFF TO LATE AND FRACTIONALIZED START. MAVROS' PREOCCUPATION WITH FOREIGN MINISTER DUTIES, LAST MINUTE ADDITION OF UNTESTED NEW FORCES, BREAKOFF OF JOHN ZIGDIS TO FORM INDEPENDENT PARTY, AND LOSS OF MITSOTAKIS AND OTHER APOSTATES, HAVE CUT INTO CU TRADITIONAL STRENGTH. FORMERLY GRAGILE ALLIANCE THAT CONSTITUTED CENTER UNION UNDE SKILLED GUIDING PERSONALITY OF GEORGE PAPANDREOU HAS NOT CAUGHT FIRE THIS TIME DESPITE NUMBER OF RESPECTED AND PROVEN CANDIDATES. CONSEQUENTLY WE ANTICIPATE THAT CU'S IMPRESSIVE 54PERCENT VICTORY IN 1964 HAS NO CHANCE OF BEING REPEATED.

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7. PASOK. THE FORTUNES OF THE PAN-HELLENIC SOCIALIST MOVEMENT ARE MORE DIFFICULT TO ASSESS THAN THOSE FO ANY OTHER PARTY IN THE ELECTIONS. IN LARGE PART THIS IS BECAUSE BOTH THE ORGANIZATION AND PLATFORM OF THE PARTY ARE TOTALLY UNLIKE ANYTHING SEEN IN GREECE BEFORE, AND BECAUSE ANDREAS PAPANDREOU'S ABILITY TO CNVERT THE ENTHUSIASM OF A YOUGHFUL COTERIE OF FOLLOWERS INTO A LARGE-SCALE VOTING PATTERN HAS YET TO BE PROVED. IT IS GENERALLY CONCEDED THAT PASOK HAS AMPLE FUNDS AND THAT ITS ORGANIZATION OF RALLIES AND DEMONSTRATIONS HAS BEEN REMARKABLY EFFICIENT. PASOK HAS STRUGGLED TO PICK UP VOTES BY EXPLOITING EMOTIONAL REACTIONS EVOKED BY ISSUES SUCH AS GREEK WITHDRAWAL FROM NATO AND REMOVAL OF U.S. BASES FROM GREECE. PASOK CANDIDATES, HOWEVER, ARENKNOWN QUANTITIES AND PAPANDREOU HIMSELF, TIELESS, SPARSE HAIR FLYING AS HE FULMINATES AGAINST THE UNITED STATES AND THE ECONOMIC OLIGARCHY AND CALLS FOR CLOSER TIES WITH EASTERN EUROPE, LOOKS MORE LIKE A CANDIDATE FOR STUDENT BODY PRESIDENT IN BERKELEY THAN FOR PRIME MINISTER IN ATHENS. HIS NAME, HIS DYNAMISM AND ORGANIZATION, AND HIS WILLINGNESS TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEMS OF THE NEW GREEK SOCIETY, HOWEVER IMPRACTICAL AND UNATTRACTIVE HIS FORMULATIONS MAY BE, SHOULD SWEEP UP THE VOTES OF THE AGGRIEVED AND ALIENATED AND THOSE AMONG RADICALIZED URBAN YOUGH WHO SUCCEEDED IN REGISTERING AND REMEMBER TO VOTE.

8. UNITED LEFT. THE BALKANIZED GREEK COMMUNISTS AND THEIR HABITUAL ALLIES ARE ONLY GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS OF

ELECTIONEERING. THEIR PROGRAM AND ORATORY IS NOTABLY LESS RADICAL THAN PAPANDREOU'S AND THE PERSONALITY OF THE COALITION IS REFLECTED IN THE SMALL, AILING AND BOURGEOIS FIGURE OF EDA LEADER ILIAS ILIOU, WHO IN A CROWDED ROOM COULD PASS FOR VICTOR MOORE IN HIS WINTERGREEN FOR PRESIDENT DAYS. UNITED LEFT'S EFFORTS TO STAY UNITED HAVE MET WITH MINIMAL SUCCESS, AND SUPREME COURT RULING THAT UNITED LEFT (EA) REPRESENTS COALITION HAS HAD FURTHER DIVISIVE IMPACT. KKE EXTERIOR CONTINUES TO CLAIM SEMI-INDEPENDENT STATUS AND COUNSELS ITS FAITHFUL TO VOTE FOR ONLY EXTERIOR CANDIDATES. KKE INTERIOR HAS RECIPROCATED, WHILE THEODORAKIS AND TWO OR THREE CANDIDATES UNDER HIS WING FURTHER MUDDLE EA
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SLATES BY ASSERTION OF EDA INDEPENDENT STATUS. MOREOVER, THEODORAKIS' PUT-DOWN OF SOME OF HIS LEFTIST COLLEAGUES WITH "AFTER CARAMANLIS COME THE TANKS" HAS BECOME POPULAR CAMPAIGN SLOGAN WHICH STICKS IN THROATS OF ALL CARAMANLIS OPPONENTS. THE EXTREME LEFT HAS CONTROLLED VOTE, HOWEVER, AND OUR ESTIMATE REFLECTS THIS.

9. GREEK DEMOCRATIC UNION. GAROUFALIAS HAS BMADE VERY LITTLE IMPRESSION IN THE CAMPAIGN. HIS CANDIDATES ARE A COLLECTION OF THREADBARE RIGHTIST POLITICIANS AND MINOR FUNCTIONARIES FROM THE DAYS OF MILITARY GOVERNMENT.

10. HOWEVER GREEK ELECTORATE VOTES ON NOVEMBER 17, OVER-RIDING FACT IS THAT GREEK PUBLIC IS EXERCISING THIS RIGHT FOR FIRST TIME IN DECADE. GREEK DEMOCRACY WILL BE RELAUNCHED WITH ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW PARLIAMENT ON DECEMBER 9, ONE DAY AFTER REFERENDUM ON FORM OF GOVERNMENT (MONARCHY OR REPUBLIC). FACT THAT CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN CONDUCTED IN SUCH ORDERLY FASHION BEARS WITNESS TO IMPORTANCE GREEKS THEMSELVES ATTACH TO RESTORATION OF DEMOCRATIC PROCESS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: GOVERNMENT REFORM, ELECTION FORECASTS, NATIONAL ELECTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 15 NOV 1974
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: cunninfx
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974ATHENS08235
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740330-0858
From: ATHENS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19741141/aaaabiqe.tel
Line Count: 263
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: cunninfx
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15 MAY 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <15 MAY 2002 by martinml>; APPROVED <18 MAR 2003 by cunninfx>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: GREEK ELECTIONS: EMBASSY'S ESTIMATES OF PROBABLE RESULTS
TAGS: PINR, GR
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005